

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: Completion of Twin Creeks Science and Education Center
Park Site: Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Date: September 19, 2007



Background: After 70 years of operating out of a series of converted facilities, including a CCC camp, former flood-relief trailers, and converted cabins, the Park's science program now has its first made-to-order lab facility. A \$4.5 million contract was awarded in 2005 to begin construction of the Twin Creeks Science and Education Center just off the Cherokee Orchard Road near Gatlinburg, TN.

The core of the \$4.5 million funding came from a pool of \$3,925,000 from the National Park Service Line Item Construction Program through support by former Senators Fred Thompson and Bill Frist. Critical supplements came from donations of \$285,000 each from the Friends of the Smokies and the Great Smoky Mountains Association and in-kind support from the City of Gatlinburg in extending utilities to the site. The total cost of equipping and furnishing the center is expected to be approximately \$4.85 million.

The center will be equipped with a large flexible workspace, a conference room, a laboratory, and an equipment room. These changes will supply Park scientists and outside researchers with almost five times the amount of space they have today. The building will also include a climate-controlled room for natural history collections and dedicated space for volunteer projects and education programs for both children and adults. We expect the new facility to be a powerful asset in both increasing the Park's research capability to guide on-going management actions and to expedite the progress of our All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory of unknown and undocumented plant and animal species.

The building is designed to have a low impact on the environment through use of natural storm water management, daylight harvesting, high-efficiency lighting with occupancy and daylighting controls, natural ventilation, high recycled content building materials, site harvested stone masonry, low-emitting finishes, and waterless urinals. The building is expected to be nationally certified as an environmentally friendly building under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system. The center will also provide a real-world model for local building owners, designers, and contractors interested in creating their own “green” buildings.

Current Status: On September 17 the Park began moving its Inventory and Monitoring, Air Quality, Vegetation, and Natural History Collection Management staffs into the new facility.

Next Steps/Strategy: The Park is planning a formal dedication in the fall of 2007. The event will serve as both a kick-off event for the Park’s 75th Anniversary, which will occur in June 2009, and as a milestone in the National Park Service’s 2016 Centennial Challenge.

Congressional District: TN-1

Representative David Davis

Senator Lamar Alexander

Senator Bob Corker

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